

a leg and a courtesy, that you would have died with laughing to have seen us.'

Unhappy as she was, it will be seen that she had a very saving sense of humour. In the same way though as weary of her suitors as any Penelope—she 'would live in a hollow tree to avoid them'—she manages to get as much amusement as any Portia out of them too; alternately laughing at them because they are so ridiculous, and teasing her lover with them because they are so attractive. The most engaging is Henry Cromwell, son of the Lord General, described by the grim Mrs. Hutchinson as a 'debauched ungodly cavalier⁵'; he is kept busy getting Dorothy Irish greyhounds on which her heart is set; and when his father dissolves the Parliament in April 1653, she cannot resist reminding Temple with a smile: 'if I had been so wise as to have taken hold of the offer was made me by H. C., I might have been in a fair way of preferment'. What would the Protector, one wonders, have made of this ironic daughter-in-law? But an even grander suitor is Sir Justinian Isham, Bart., of Lamport, whom she generally refers to as 'the Emperor' on the strength of his Christian name; a county magnate, Solomon and Daniel in one, with four grown-up daughters. She promises Temple, by way of consolation, to put in a good word for him with one or other of these young women, in case she becomes their step-mother. But it was as

well for Sir
Justinian she did not. 'Oh, my conscience! we
should all
have joined against him as the common
enemy, for those
poor young wenches are as weary of his
government as I
could have been. He gives them such precepts
as they say
my Lord of Dorchester gives his wife, and
keeps them so
much prisoners to a vile house he has in
Northampton-
shire, that if once I had but let them loose,
they and his
learning would have been sufficient to have
made him